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U. S. Department of Agriculture

BLANKET NEWS

A radio conversation between Miss Ruth Van Deman, ~~Bureau of Home Economics~~ and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Thursday, September 29, 1938, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 93 associate radio stations.

WALLACE KADDERLY:

Today, Ruth Van Deman, your home economics reporter, is here with blanket news--which I take it covers the latest recommendations of the textile experts.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

You take it right, Mr. Wallace Kadderly. I've just had a long talk with Margaret Hays about buying winter blankets.

KADDERLY:

A long talk?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, but I'm only going to give a few headlines. You remember we talked about labels on blankets one time last winter.

KADDERLY:

I do. Anything new on that?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes. I'm glad to say there are more and better labels on blankets this fall.

KADDERLY:

Good. Then it's easier to tell which ones are all-wool.

VAN DEMAN:

The all-wools are more likely to be labeled plainly. It's the part-wool and part-cotton that are confusing.

KADDERLY:

Don't the commercial standards take care of that?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, but one needs to know just what these standards mean. For instance, there's a label that says "not less than 5% wool." That's on a very popular group of low-priced blankets. It may mean that the blanket has in it anywhere from 5 to 25 percent of wool. Out of all the blankets that Margaret Hays analyzed in that class, most of them had only 5 to 9 percent of wool.

KADDERLY:

Why not be a little more realistic and say 95 to 89 percent cotton?

VAN DEMAN:

Well, I guess it's just that we've got wool, and warmth, and blankets firmly fixed in our minds.

KADDERLY:

But a little bit of wool like that can't have much effect.

VAN DEMAN:

No, not very much. But when you find a blanket labeled 80 percent wool and 20 percent cotton, with the cotton in the warp to make a good strong foundation and the wool in the filling brushed up to make a thick soft nap--then you've got a good economical combination..

KADDERLY:

How does a blanket like that compare with one that's all-wool?

VAN DEMAN:

You mean an all-wool at the same price. That would be the only fair way.

KADDERLY:

Yes.

VAN DEMAN:

The cotton and wool would probably be stronger. And it might be as warm. Of course these labels that tell what kind of fibers a blanket is made of are no guarantee of quality. There are many grades of wool.

KADDERLY:

Yes. Of course.

VAN DEMAN:

Some short weak fibers. Some long strong fibers. And there are many, many ways of weaving the wool so it will stay anchored in the blanket and not go rolling over the bedroom floor in kittens every morning.

KADDERLY:

It hurts me to see good wool blow away like that. I've been on too many sheep ranches. I know what it means to produce wool and get it to market.

VAN DEMAN:

Well some blankets are overnapped. All blanketing, you know, is woven flat. When it comes from the loom it's just plain cloth--coarse as burlap. Then the napping machines go to work on it--the little sharp claws on the rollers catch hold of the fibers and pull them up to give that soft, fluffy blanket texture.

KADDERLY:

A very interesting process. I'm glad I'm not the operator who has to decide when a blanket's had enough of that.

VAN DEMAN:

Every blanket I understand has to be a compromise-- between the thickness of the nap, and the strength of the foundation yarns, and the weight of it as a bed covering. Most people want a warm blanket with a lot of insulating power, but they don't want it to feel heavy.

KADDERLY:

There's one thing no, two things I'd never compromise on.

VAN DEMAN:

What are they?

KADDERLY:

Length and width.

VAN DEMAN:

Then you want to watch the wool market.

KADDERLY:

What's that got to do with size of wool blankets?

VAN DEMAN:

When wool goes way up in price, the mills cut down on the size of blankets; they make--I mean those they're making to sell in a popular price range. They make more 70- by 80- inch blankets when wool is expensive. But when the wool market's overstocked and the price drops way down, then more of the looms are set to make 72- by 84-inch blankets.

KADDERLY:

But the label has to give the exact size.

VAN DEMAN:

It should. But labels get lost sometimes, particularly on special sale goods. So it doesn't do any harm to have a pair of blankets measured up. They're something one doesn't buy every day. They need to be a good generous size to allow for the shrinking that's sure to come after washing or even dry cleaning.

KADDERLY:

Isn't there some kind of a formula for estimating just how large blankets should be to fit on a bed?

VAN DEMAN:

There is a very neat one. To tell how large a blanket to buy, pull out the measuring tape and take the length of the mattress, plus the thickness of the mattress. Add to that at least 6 inches for tuck-in at the foot of the bed, and if possible another 6 inches for take-up by the body and shrinkage in cleaning. That will probably add up to 84 inches. Maybe to 90.

KADDERLY:

What's six extra inches of blanket beside a lifetime of comfort.

VAN DEMAN:

That's what lots of people have decided. There's more demand all the time for 84- and 90-inch blankets. It's like the 108-inch sheet.

KADDERLY:

By the way, is that bulletin Guides for Buying Sheets, Blankets, and Bath Towels still available?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, I'm sure it is.

KADDERLY:

Maybe some of the new homemaker-listeners don't know about it.

VAN DEMAN:

Well, anybody who wants "Guides for Buying Sheets, Blankets, and Bath Towels", is very welcome to a copy.

KADDERLY:

And the requests should come to you as usual?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, I'll be glad to take care of them.

KADDERLY:

Very well. If anyone wants a copy of Guides for Buying Sheets, Blankets, and Bath Towels, just drop a card to the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. And thank you, Ruth Van Deman, for these additional suggestions on how to select warm blankets for winter wear. We'll expect you up here next week at this same time.

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